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Grammatical categories as a means of creating discourse pictures of the world and cortege interaction (on the basis of political discourse)

Introduction

The study of political discourse is one of the most complex and urgent problems of modern linguistics (T. van Dijk, R. Wodak, A.N. Baranov, A.P. Chudinov, E.R. Lassan, E.I. Sheigal, I.F. Oukhvanova, etc.). As pointed out by professor E.I. Sheigal, a representative of the Volgograd school of discourse, the author of the monograph "*Semiotics of political discourse*",

«the specifics of politics, in contrast to many other areas of human activity, lies in its mostly discursive nature: many political actions are per se speech acts» (Шейгал, 2004: 18).

Linguists stated not once that many political actions are inherently speech actions:

"Such disputes [...] are politics. Politics partly consists in the disputes and struggles which occur in language and over language" (Fairclough, 1989: 23),

and consequently,

“political speech analysis can be successful when it relates the details of linguistic behavior to political behavior” (Schäffner, 1996: 202).

Of course, language is not the only means of struggle for power, but its role in politics can hardly be overestimated. It is language that helps to correct the individual picture of the world and to affect the listener’s thoughts and emotions. That is why the key concepts of my study will be those of discourse pictures of the world and cortege interaction (the terms of the representatives of the causal-genetic approach). *The discourse picture of the world* refers to

«object-oriented, or more precisely, subject-object content (other possible names - referent, thematic), which answers the questions: what is discourse about and how is this «what» organized thematically?» (Ухванова-Шмыгова, 2009: 21).

The discourse picture of cortege interaction is

«subject-oriented, or more precisely, subject-subject content that answers the question: who communicates and how is this interaction presented ...»(ibid: 22).

A chiefly linguistic character of political activity causes the necessity to study language means participating in construction of political discourse. As professor O.S. Issers, the author of the detailed description of the communicative strategies and tactics of the Russian speech, states,

“the main subject matter of the linguistic analysis of speech influence is connected with the study of the speaker’s strategies and all the language resources he has at hand that determine his achievement of a communicative goal” (Иссерс, 2011: 23).

Despite the interest of linguists in the problem of communication strategies in general and the communicative strategy of persuasion in particular, as well as the active development of this issue in recent years, nowadays most works are devoted to the study of lexical means of realization of various strategies. Therefore, the study of the role of the grammatical categories in the actualization of the communicative strategy of persuasion, and consequently the construction of the discourse pictures of the world and cortege interaction, seems very promising. The choice of grammatical categories of person and tense as a subject of study is due to their universality and interdependence, as well as their functional significance in the communicative and suggestive aspects. The universal functional-semantic category of personality is directly linked to temporality, as these two categories relate the particular situation with a certain act of speech.

The study was performed on the material of total 22 scripts of State of the Union Addresses and Addresses of the President of the Russian Federation to the Federal Assembly (11 in each language, 2001–2011, sources: <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/sou.php>; <http://www.kremlin.ru/>). The material was chosen due to the possibility of comparing the language material within the same genre, which in the first case is well established in the linguistic culture of the state, while the second – relatively new. Comparison of the grammatical means of the English and Russian languages used by the speaker will reveal general patterns of communication in these discursive conditions as well as specific features of each of the languages.

The aim of the research is to state the role of the grammatical categories of time and person in the realization of the communicative strategy of persuasion and construction of the discourse pictures of the world and correlative interaction in presidential addresses to the parliament.

Presidential address to the parliament as a genre of political discourse

The genre structure of modern political discourse is quite diverse: from everyday conversations about politics and political jokes to international negotiations. Differentiation of genres is performed according to different principles. E.I. Sheigal (Шейгал, 2004: 232–246), basing on the analysis of an extensive material of Russian and American political discourse, proposes to allocate the following parameters structuring its genre space: institutionality, or officiality; subject-addressee relationship; social and cultural differentiation; event localization; prototype (centrality) – marginality degree of the genre in the field structure of discourse; the nature of the leading intention.

The studied genre of the presidential address to the parliament has a number of unique characteristics and performs certain functions (informative, integrative and inspirational), the main function of which is to maintain and strengthen the status of the institute of presidency (see Василенко, 2013). According to the plan suggested by E.I. Sheigal, the address refers to institutional prototypical genres performed on the level “politician – the whole society or large social groups”. The most interesting characteristic of the address is the nature of the leading intention as it combines the features of the orientational and ritual genres. It is obvious that the address refers to orientational genres in view of its immediate objective – to give an account of the last year’s policy and to present the forthcoming agenda to the parliament. At the same time, the presidential address to the parliament can be treated also as a ritual genre on the basis of its spatial and temporal localization, thematic set of communication and fixed structure.

Due to their long tradition, addresses of American presidents have acquired more characteristics of the ritual genre than those of Russian leaders whose speeches are mostly orientational.

This is evidenced by the presence in the addresses of the US Presidents of a settled speech formula of address to the audience, an open call for unity in the concluding part and a greater solemnity of performances.

In general, the compositional scheme of the genre of address may be presented as it is shown in Figure 1. This scheme allows us to identify the “inner logic” of the address and make the initial assumption about its meaningful space – that is, the discourse picture of the world and the discourse picture of correlative interaction. Analysis of the grammatical structure of the messages will be presented below, but already at this stage it can be argued, for example, that addresses of the president, in contrast to, e.g., their inaugural address that are characterized by the so-called “timelessness” (Campbell and Jamieson, 2008: 46), are focused on modeling of the program “from the past through the present to the future.”

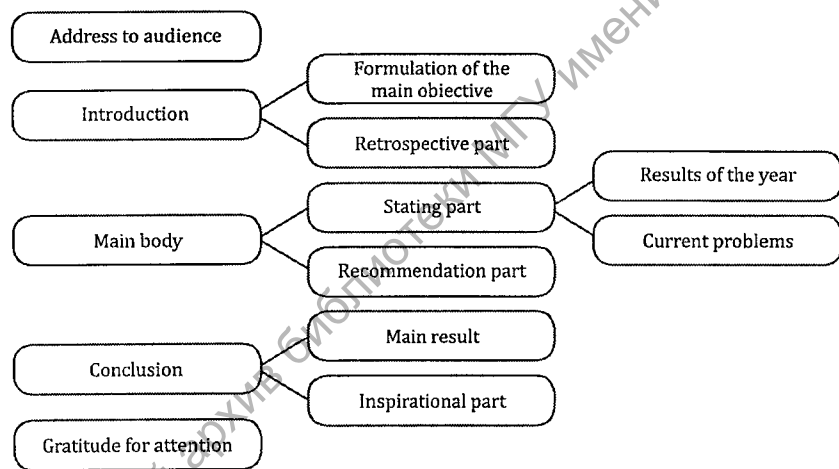


Figure 1. General compositional scheme of the presidential address to the parliament

Grammatical category of tense as a means of constructing discourse picture of the world

The category of tense, being the morphological core of the functional-semantic category of temporality, is

«a system of grammatical forms used to express the relation of the action to the moment of speech or to the time of another action» (Бондарко, Буланин, 1967: 76).

In addition, the category of tense «inscribes» almost all sentences used in the speech in the deictic coordinates (Арутюнова, Падучева, 1985: 16; Medhurst, 2006: 682).

Given that verbal tense forms indicate the relation of the event to some moment, the most natural and simple form of presentation time is an infinite timeline divided into three segments: past, present and future (Michaelis, 2006: 220). This division follows, according to N.D. Arutyunova (Арутюнова, 1999: 688), from the main condition that determines a person's position in the world: incomprehensibility of the future, knowledge of the past and the given character of the present. Thus, the human factor plays a crucial role in modeling time.

The pragmatic value of the category of tense consists in the fact that the addresser has a certain freedom in the presentation of the event. B.Yu. Norman (Норман, 2009: 117) notes that, depending on the place the speaker assigns himself on the time axis and the way he is going to organize the text, he can manipulate time. With the help of tense forms, that are internally connected with the aspect, the speaker can «compress» or «expand» space, “zoom in” or “zoom out” the event, as well as regulate his relations with other people.

Let us consider the functioning of the category of tense in the addresses of the US and Russian presidents. The total amount of the tense forms analyzed is shown in Table 1:

Table 1. Total amount of the tense forms in the addresses of the US and Russian presidents

	Past	Present	Future	Total
USA	764	4600	705	6069
RF	1091	5168	894	7153

Let us first consider the addresses of the American leaders. The proportion of different tense groups can be seen in Diagram 1.

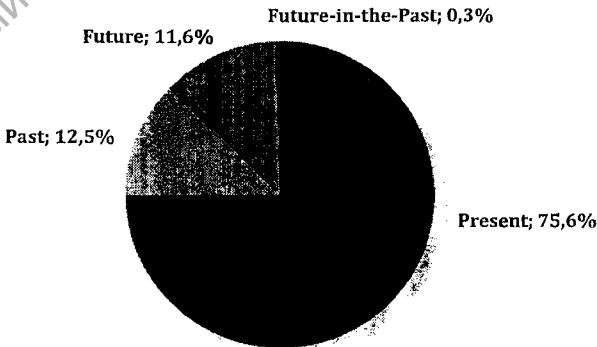


Diagram 1. Proportion of Present, Past, Future and Future-in-the-Past tense groups in State of the Union Addresses

The data presented in the chart show that the most frequently used tense group is Present, and the rarest – Future-in-the-Past. Past and Future tenses occur at approximately the same frequency with a slight superiority of the former.

As stated in normative grammars, 16 times are allocated in the English language. In the analyzed texts, however, occur only 11 of them. There haven't been found any Future Perfect Continuous, Past Perfect Continuous, Future-in-the-Past Continuous, Future-in-the-Past Perfect and Future-in-the Past Perfect Continuous forms. It is significant that tense forms of Present Perfect Continuous, Past Continuous, Past Perfect, Future Perfect, and Future-in-the Past Simple make up less than 1% of all used tense forms.

At the same time the use of Present Indefinite is the most frequent (58,8%), followed by Past Indefinite and Future Indefinite (12,2% and 11,5% respectively), Present Perfect (9,9%) and Present Continuous (6,8%). The use of these five tenses makes up 99.2% of the total use of tense forms. These data confirm the fact that addresses of US presidents are oriented on the modelling the program «from the past through the present to the future», with emphasis on the present.

We arrive at a similar conclusion after analyzing the speeches of the Russian presidents. Taking into account only available verbal tense forms, the ratio of the tenses in the addresses of the Russian presidents can be represented as follows (Diagram 2):

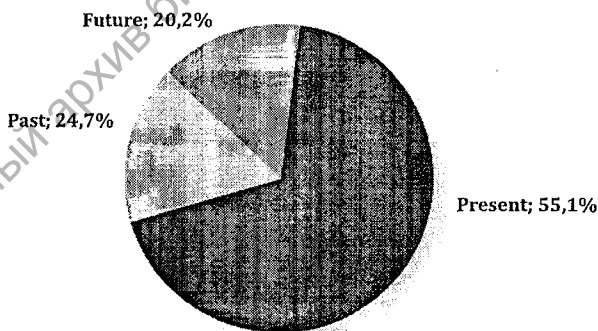


Diagram 2. Proportion of Present, Past and Future tense groups in Addresses of the President of the Russian Federation to the Federal Assembly

The data presented in the chart indicate that, similar to the speeches of the American presidents, the most frequent in the speeches of the Russian leaders is the use of present tense forms, and the percentage of past and future forms is approximately the same.

Of greater interest to our study, however, is the analysis of the material in view of the so-called timeless sentences. The specifics of the Russian language allows the speaker to use such language forms in which there is no finite verb form, for example, infinitive sentences (a) or sentences with a compound nominal predicate (b):

- a) *Задача на трехлетнюю перспективу – снизить ее до 4–5 процентов в год.*
The challenge for the three-year term is to reduce it to 4–5 per cent a year' (2010);
- b) *В целом, очевидна тенденция к расширению в мире конфликтного пространства.*
In general, the tendency to expand conflict zones in the world is obvious' (2006).

Taking into consideration the fact that the vast majority of these sentences relate to the present time (and in English they would have the present verb form), or more precisely, to the time that O. Jespersen calls "generic time" (Jespersen 1958: 259), and I.G. Miloslavskii – present improper ("несобственно настоящее") (Милославский, 1981: 212), since the present form does not necessarily mean the coincidence of the time of the act with the moment of speech, the results of the study of the Russian presidents' speeches are even more similar to those obtained in the analysis of the speeches of their US counterparts (see Diagram 3):

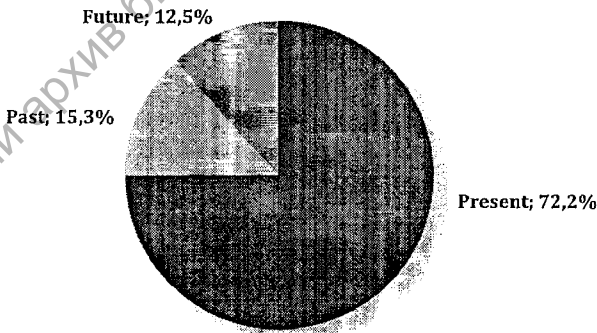


Diagram 3. Proportion of Present, Past and Future tense groups in Addresses of the President of the Russian Federation to the Federal Assembly with account of timeless sentences

The given data suggest that, regardless of the language of communication, the use of verbal tenses in presidents' messages is one of the main tools of modeling a specific discourse picture of the world based on the program *from the past through the present to the future*. The speaker focuses mainly on the present, which stresses the importance of the happening events in the mind of the recipient.

Furthermore, regardless of the language of communication, the category of tense is enriched with similar pragmatic tones in the speeches of the American and Russian presidents. Thus, the opposition of different tense forms in one context may indicate a radical change of the situation, or to emphasize the connection of what is happening at the present moment with the events of the past, as well as to emphasize the effectiveness of the taken measures and a pursued policy:

Thanks to the tax cuts we passed, Americans' paychecks are a little bigger today. Every business can write off the full cost of new investments that they make this year. And these steps, taken by Democrats and Republicans, will grow the economy and add to the more than 1 million private sector jobs created last year (2011);

Прежде всего, Россия была, есть и, конечно, будет крупнейшей европейской нацией. 'First of all, Russia was, is and, of course, will be the largest European nation' (2005);

The use of the present form instead of the future one makes the described events closer to the recipient, which creates a sense of belonging to this historical moment.

At stake right now is not who wins the next election. [...] At stake is whether new jobs and industries take root in this country or somewhere else (2011);

В следующем году мы празднуем 65-летие Победы, чествуем наших ветеранов – спасителей нашего Отечества, героев, отстоявших нашу свободу, прошедших войну, поднявших страну из руин. 'Next year we celebrate the 65th anniversary of the Victory, we honour our veterans – the saviors of our Fatherland, the heroes who defended our freedom, who went through the war, who raised the country from the ruins' (2009).

For other pragmatic shades of tense forms see (Василенко, 2013).

Thus, the analysis of the use of verbal tense forms in the addresses of the US and Russian presidents shows that for all the structural peculiarities of the English and Russian languages in the given discursive conditions we observe general patterns of use of the grammatical category of tense. It can be stated that tense forms help the speaker to construct a special discourse picture of the world peculiar to namely this genre of political discourse, with its own division of time which underlines the presence of a person in a given place at a given time.

Grammatical category of person as a means of constructing discourse picture of cortege

In terms of functional grammar, personality is not only

«a semantic category, characterizing the participants of the referred situation in relation to the participants of the speech situation – especially the speaker,»

but also

«a functional-semantic field, based on this semantic category which is considered along with means of its expression in a particular language «(Теория, 1991: 5).

In Russian the two morphological cores of the category of personality are personal forms of verbs and pronouns (Бондарко, Буланин, 1967: 135), while in English pronouns is its sole core.

Since pronouns refer to basic linguistic means of expression of personality in both languages, we will focus on the study of their capacity for constructing a discourse picture of cortege interaction. The classes of personal and possessive pronouns are of the greatest interest in this regard.

We will not focus neither on the semantic complexity of pronouns as a class of words in general (in this regard see works by L. Bloomfield, R. Jakobson, O. Jespersen, A. Potebnja, N.Yu. Shvedova, etc.), nor on the theoretical aspect of these two classes of pronouns in particular (though even the question of existence of the separate class of possessive pronouns is controversial (see Шахматов, 2001, Isačenko, 1968), to say nothing of the scope and content of the category of possessivity). What is relevant to our study is the fact that pronouns the class of words which is very rich in a pragmatic relation. As pointed by G. Yule (1996: 10), “the simplicity of these forms disguises the complexity of their use”.

In the analyzed texts 7771 cases of the use of pronouns were identified. It is significant that in the speeches of American presidents this amount is much greater than in the speeches of the Russian leaders (5075 and 2696 respectively), which is easily explained by the possibility to omit the personal pronoun in a Russian sentence. However, it is interesting that the percentage of the use of pronouns in the analyzed texts is subject to the general rules (see Diagrams 4 and 5).

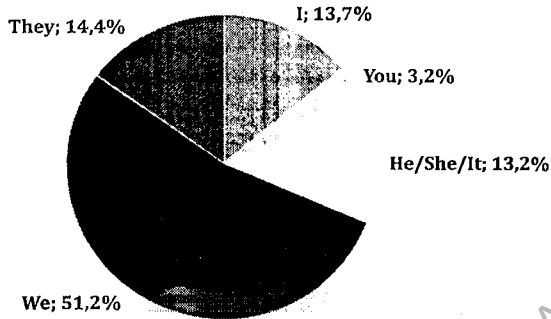


Diagram 4. Proportion of personal and possessive pronouns in State of the Union Addresses

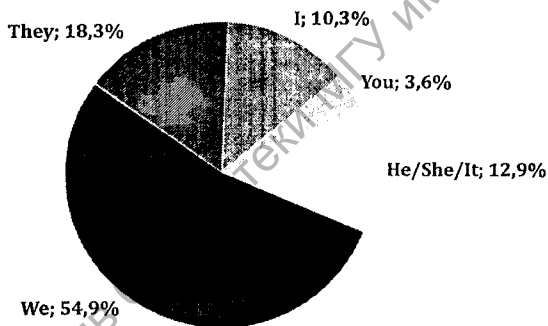


Diagram 5. Proportion of personal and possessive pronouns in Addresses of the President of the Russian Federation to the Federal Assembly

As the charts above show, regardless of the language of communication, we can observe the formation of the similar of discourse picture of cortège interaction, as evidenced by the speaker's general tendency to use most frequently 1pl. pronouns, and most rarely – 2pl. It demonstrates the addresser's desire of solidarity and unity with the audience. The use of 1sing. pronouns is one of the basic means of realization of the tactics of self-presentation an connected with it tactics of promise and call. When used as the subject, pronoun *I* suggests the speaker's positioning above the audience, demonstrating a higher social status, assuming the right to give orders and to impose assessments:

Some might call this a good record. I call it a good start (2003);

Я прошу ускорить формальное согласование. I am asking to speed up the formal voting' (2005);

2pl. pronoun within the genre of address primarily represents the immediate audience, and serves the purpose of maintaining contact and attracting attention:

As you can imagine, this is a process that will take some time (2009);

Вы знаете, финансовые потрясения уже привели к ухудшению платежеспособности ведущих стран [...]. You know that financial shocks have already caused worsening of solvency of the leading countries [...] (2011).

It is also noteworthy that US leaders also use the pronoun *you* to address one concrete person, which is not typical of their Russian colleagues:

Shannon, I assure you and all who have lost a loved one that our cause is just, and our country will never forget the debt we owe Michael and all who gave their lives for freedom (2002).

3sing. and 3pl. pronouns fulfil in the addresses primarily the anaphoric function without any pragmatic meaning.

3pl. pronoun realizes its pragmatic potential when actualizing the tactics of comparative analysis (a) and distancing (b) (especially when used in the context with *we*):

- a) *При этом подчеркни, что наши расходы на оборону [...] уже не идут ни в какое сравнение с расходами Соединенных Штатов Америки. Их военный бюджет в – абсолютных величинах – почти в 25 раз больше, чем у России. Вот это и называется в оборонной сфере «Их дом – их крепость». И молодцы. 'Let me underline that our defence expenses [...] cannot compare with the expenses of the United States of America. Their military budget – in absolute figures – is almost 25 times larger than Russia's one. That is what is called in the defence sphere "Their house is their fortress". And good for them'* (2006);
- b) *Terrorists like bin Laden are serious about mass murder, and all of us must take their declared intentions seriously. They seek to impose a heartless system of totalitarian control throughout the Middle East and arm themselves with weapons of mass murder. Their aim is to seize power in Iraq [...]. But they have miscalculated: We love our freedom, and we will fight to keep it* (2006);

It is not surprising that it is 1pl. pronoun that possesses the greatest pragmatic potential, which is due to its semantic ambiguity. The most frequent use of *we* (see Figures 5 and 6) in the inclusive meaning serves the purpose of psychological rapprochement between the speaker and the audience and creating an atmosphere of cooperation and trust:

Despite our hardships, our union is strong. We do not give up. We do not quit. We do not allow fear or division to break our spirit (2010);

Но даже в этих сложнейших условиях у нас нет права останавливаться в развитии. [...] И только вместе мы сможем пройти этот нелегкий путь. 'But even under these hardest conditions we do not have the right to stop the development. [...] And only together we can go this difficult way' (2011).

In most cases the inclusive *we* in the speeches of the presidents of both countries is a form of solidarity with the audience important to the speaker – representatives of the authorities. The Russian leaders, in contrast to the American ones, rarely emphasize in such a way the unity of all citizens of the country, which suggests a more ritualism of the addresses of the US presidents and their orientation to a wide audience (for more about the inclusive and exclusive meaning of *we* and other pragmatic shades of pronouns see Василенко, 2013)

Thus, the analysis of pragmatic peculiarities of the use of the category of person within the genre of presidential address to the parliament shows that, for all the structural specificity of the English and Russian languages, in this case quite explicit general regularities take place, i.e. we observe the construction of a similar discourse picture of cortege interaction. These regularities, on the one hand, are determined by the specificity of the genre (for example, a rare use of 2pl. pronouns and the use of 3p. pronouns in the anaphoric function rather than as an implementation of the semiotic opposition *friend or foe*), and on the other hand – are dictated by the general principles of the realization of the tactics of persuasion (the most frequent use of 1pl. pronouns in the inclusive meaning in order to create a psychological atmosphere of trust).

Conclusion

For all the structural differences of the Russian and English languages the regularities of use of pragmatic potential of grammatical categories in the given discursive conditions (namely within the genre of the presidential address to the parliament) are similar. The grammatical categories of person and tense the main means of constructing the discourse pictures of the world and cortege interaction.

The category of tense in the address is used to actualize mainly the tactics of comparative analysis, illustration, promise, call and cooperation. This category is the most important means of modelling the programme *from the past through the present to the future*, which

leads to the formation in the mind of the recipient the discourse picture of the world with a special division of time focused on the present. Pragmatic shades of different tense forms within this genre do not depend on a particular language and can be explained by the common communicative intention of the speaker.

The category of person in the address is one of the major means of constructing the discourse picture of correlative interaction, which demonstrates the desire of the speaker to get closer to the significant audience. This category is used to actualize, primarily, the tactics of self-presentation (1sing. pronoun), cooperation (1pl. pronoun), accentuation (2pl. pronoun), comparative analysis and distancing (3pl. pronoun). Common discursive conditions explain the tendency to the most frequent use of 1pl. pronoun, and the rarest use of 2pl. pronoun.

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